



JOHN BAIGENT

MAY 1, 1941 - DECEMBER 3, 2016

*Hark, now hear the sailors cry
Smell the sea and feel the sky
Let your soul and spirit fly into the mystic*

Van Morrison

The Path: John grew up in Toronto (for which he never quite forgave his parents) with an English Canadian dad, Murray, and French Canadian mom, Suzanne. His French Canadian roots prevailed and at 15 he moved to Montreal to live with his beloved Aunt Therese Barré and attend Loyola High School. Thus began an enduring love affair with La Belle Province. High school was followed by two reflective and formative years in a Jesuit seminary (perhaps an early indication of a bent for the law) and then a return to Montreal for a B.A. at Loyola College, now Concordia. After his B.A., Africa beckoned and John headed to Ghana for two years of teaching high school as a CUSO volunteer, an experience that shaped his life forever. This was followed by a year in Ottawa running CUSO's West Africa program. Then off to law school (Dalhousie and Harvard) before moving to British Columbia in 1970 and practicing law in Vancouver for 20 years. Finally, founding and running *Partners in the Horn of Africa*, a Canadian aid organization based in Enderby and focused on Ethiopia where Ethiopians were "partners" in projects they chose for their communities. John spent a good part of the last 15 years living and working in Ethiopia, a country he loved and whose culture and people he greatly admired.

The Highlights: Coming of age in Quebec during the Quiet Revolution and early years of the Peace Corps, developing a sense of social justice and seeing life as an opportunity for social change and an obligation to help others; raising 6 wonderful children (Kevin, Martin, Andrew, Spring, Joey and Tigist) and enjoying loving relationships with Diane, Marguerite and Woinshet; representing working people for many years and practicing law in the early days of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, arguing on behalf of trade unions for a broad interpretation of Canada's basic freedoms of association and expression; swinging dry flies across the Bulkley River for summer steelhead; spending months on end in the land of Prester John and learning so much about true "civilization" from the people of Ethiopia whose lack of material wealth allows them to treasure and nurture personal relationships. And ten wonderful end years with Woinshet.

Final Notes: John was grateful for an early diagnosis of AML, which he chose to share with only a very few as he did not want to be treated any differently because of his illness. The knowledge of his diagnosis allowed him to devote the last years of his life to family and friends and deepen his relationship with his 8 grandchildren and his Ethiopian daughter, Tigist, all of whom he was so proud. He left us with few regrets and a sense of gratitude for "a good run."

"My predominant feeling is one of gratitude. I have loved and been loved. I have been given much and I have given something in return." ~Oliver Sachs

A Celebration of Life will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 4, 2017 at the Riverside Community Hall on Trinity Valley Road, 10km east of Enderby.